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Findings from the dig include rusty iron nails and a piece of a clay pipe.

## Irish Excavation Results in Historic Finds

### Students Uncover 19th Century Artifacts at St. Patrick's in Lowell

Perhaps the prayers of St. Patrick's pastor, Rev. James Taggart, helped. On the first day of the excavation of a former shanty town located on parish grounds and inhabited by Lowell's early Irish settlers, University students unearthed a section of 150-year-old rosary beads, remnants of a clay pipe and several iron nails.

The dig—part of a collaboration between UMass Lowell and Queen's University in Dublin—has resulted in extensive media coverage, both locally and as far away as the Dublin-based Irish Times.

"The Irish laborers who came to Lowell to help build the canals to power the mills left a lasting legacy in the city, and it's fascinating to be able to piece together clues of their lives here," says Frank Talty, co-director of the UMass Lowell's Center for Irish Partnerships.

"Archaeology is a lot like an onion—there are layers upon layers," explains Dave McKean, archivist at St. Patrick's. "Each time you reach one layer, there is another underneath it. The students sprinkled water on the top layers of soil to make color variations, which help archaeologists assess what the land was used for. Looking for answers brought more questions. Was a foundation located? Is this coal? Does this mean there was a hearth here?"

McKean reports that many interested parties dropped by the site and that some old research is being revisited. Antique maps are being adapted to new GPS technology to pinpoint locations, 19th century photos are helping identify structures

and their foundations and primary source documents are giving leads to new findings.

The findings will help form a picture of the lives of the Irish who emigrated to Lowell looking for work during the Great Famine, a period of mass starvation and disease in Ireland between 1845 and 1852.

As part of the exchange program, students will excavate an abandoned rural settlement in County Fermanagh, Ireland next summer.

The Lowell dig is one of many outcomes resulting from the University's initiative to develop international partnerships to expand global learning experiences for students and enrich the research portfolios of the faculty.



Students Alaina Puleo, a biology graduate student from Tyngsboro, and Jonathan Brown, a work environment graduate student from Dracut, were among six students digging for artifacts at St. Patrick's Church in Lowell, where hundreds of Irish lived in a shanty town in the 1800s.

UMass Lowell is ranked in the top 200 national research universities by US News and World Report.